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Meeting the

BASIC NEEDS OF FIRST-YEAR 4-H CLUB MEMBERS



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This booklet is meant for local leaders and Extension agents—to help provide a satisfying experience for first-year 4-H members. It takes teamwork of leaders, agents, members, and parents to do this. Don't try to do the job alone. Sharing this responsibility gives leaders more time to spend with first-year members and strengthens the program for all.

Check your own local or county program against the findings given here. Notice the checklists of "Do I do thus-and-so" questions. In answering them, ask yourself: Can parents or even members do these jobs as well or even better than I?

This booklet resulted from findings of the third phase of the Western regional study of first-year 4-H members. The study was supervised by the following committee:

C. O. Youngstrom, associate extension director, Idaho, chairman.

Mae Baird, State home demonstration leader, Wyoming (now State leader of home economics, Kansas).

H. R. Baker, assistant extension director, Arizona.

Cecil Staver, State 4-H Club leader, Colorado.

Esther Taskerud, assistant State 4-H Club leader (now State extension agent), Oregon.

Laurel K. Sabrosky, extension analyst, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Some Tips for Meeting Basic Needs . . .

- ✓ Consider each first-year member as an individual of personal worth to the club and to the community.
- ✓ Make each first-year member feel important—
 - ... When he first joins.
 - ... During the club year.
 - ... At the end of the year.
- ✓ Make a special effort to visit club members' parents who show little interest in 4-H Club work.
- ✓ See that every first-year member has something special to do in carrying on club activities.
- ✓ Make certain that each first-year member has the necessary information and supplies to complete his project.
- ✓ Work out several ways that will give recognition to members who do not exhibit or compete.
- ✓ Have the club take part in some community activity that attracts favorable notice and gives prestige.

MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS of First-Year 4-H Club Members

Laurel K. Sabrosky
Extension Analyst

During 1950 and 1951, extension agents in 121 counties in 11 Western States studied 205 boys and girls. These young people, chosen at random, had been in 4-H Club work for 1 year, but had not reenrolled for the second.

Case reports written for each member revealed many different local situations, but most reports had one thing in common. It was this: *The situations in which many first-year members found themselves did not satisfy some of their basic developmental needs.* In nearly every case it seemed natural for the boy or girl to reject 4-H Club work and turn to some other interest that might be more satisfying, or at least less unsatisfying.

The committee does not know how widely these unsatisfying situations also exist among second-year (reenrolled) members, but are counterbalanced by some other attraction or satisfaction. However, case reports show rather reliably that they do exist among many dropouts, so they probably also exist to some degree among many reenrolled members. Hence the committee feels that agents and leaders can profitably give more attention to these three aspects of working with boys and girls:

1. Their need for a sense of personal worth.
Desire for attention—desire for prestige—desire to excel.
2. Their need for a continuing sense of personal security.
3. Their desire for a feeling of accomplishment.



Fulfill these three basic needs of first-year members and keep them in club work.

Each first-year 4-H member needs to have those experiences, among others, in his club work that will help satisfy these three needs and desires. Every child has many other developmental and social-adjustment needs, but in this booklet we'll consider only those three.

LOCAL 4-H CLUB MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

In regular local club meetings and other activities, the individual member may have an opportunity to satisfy some of his need for—

Attention.

Prestige.

A continuing sense of personal security.

However, if the meetings are to be effective, several things must happen.

The member needs to attend almost all club meetings and activities. When he fails to attend, 4-H Club work has lost one of its major opportunities to provide satisfying situations for the member.

Members fail to attend club meetings and other activities for various reasons. Among them are lack of transportation, and lack of knowledge or interest in club work by parents.

Even when a member attends quite regularly, the three basic needs may be difficult to meet if—

The member's personal friends or boys and girls of his own age do not belong to the same group and attend its meetings.

The member is not given a position of some importance or prestige by being elected to an office; being named to a committee; or given responsibility for some job during the meeting or other activity, or in getting ready for it.

Discussion Check List:

(Think who can do each task best: leader, agent, member, or parent.)

1. Do I try to find out the reasons for nonattendance at meetings, and to correct them?

At other activities or events?

2. When members are first enrolled, do I try to enroll groups of friends as well as individuals?

3. When the age range is wide, do I group members by age, rather than by years in club work?

4. Do I provide an opportunity for every first-year club member to hold an office, serve on a committee, or have some other responsibility of his own?

5. Do I make a special effort to see that every first-year club member has a group responsibility?

6. Do I encourage all first-year members, and give them the opportunity to participate actively in meetings?

In other activities or events?

7. Do I vary club meetings enough so as to have the chance to meet the many interests of 4-H'ers?

Do I vary the activity program enough?

8. Do I arrange for transportation for those who need it?
9. Do I give prestige to new members when they first enroll through an initiation ceremony and other recognition?
10. Do I train local leaders adequately in—
 - Democratic leadership?
 - Group work techniques?
 - Recreation?
 - Developmental needs of children?

AGE OF 4-H CLUB MEMBERS

Although the needs discussed in this booklet are basic to all youth, their relative importance varies as the boy or girl advances from a 10- or 11-year old to a young adult 20 years of age. Other needs become important, too, as youth develops.

Data in recent studies have shown that a boy or girl who enters 4-H Club work at 10 or 11 years of age is more likely to stay with the work than one who enrolls at a later age. This may be because 4-H Club work as set up for first-year members probably is more satisfying to a 10- or 11-year old than to an older boy or girl.

Discussion Check List:

(Think who can do each task best: leader, agent, member, or parent.)

1. Do I urge older 4-H members, each year, to invite all 10-year-olds to join a 4-H Club?
2. Do I make a special effort, each year, to inform the boys and girls who will be potential members in the year ahead, and to arouse their interest?
3. Do I make a special effort to adjust subject-matter project work to the maturity of the members?
4. Do I make a special effort to provide older first-year members with greater responsibility?

SUBJECT-MATTER PROJECT WORK

Through subject-matter project work, such as gardening and clothing, the boy or girl starting in 4-H Club work can get some satisfaction of his desire for—

- A feeling of accomplishment.
- Attention.
- Prestige.
- Excelling.

However, he can get little satisfaction from his project if he does not work at it actively, reach a set goal, and let others know about it.

This requires that the member carry a project in which he is interested, and that he receive the help he needs in completing it.

A project that is not completed hinders the member in receiving the attention and the feeling of accomplishment he needs.

Discussion Check List:

(Think who can do each task best: leader, agent, member, or parent.)

1. Do I give adequate subject-matter training to—
 - Adult local leaders? Junior leaders?

2. Do I consider carefully which projects, and how many, I can lead capably among club members during a club year?
3. Do I offer a wide enough variety of projects to fit the interests and home facilities of members?
4. Do I help first-year members in selecting projects best suited to home facilities and situations?
5. Do I train local leaders to analyze each member's situation, and to provide adequate project help for those not being helped enough at home?
6. Do I inform parents, preferably in person, of the 4-H member's project needs and requirements?
7. Do I make a special effort to see that each member has needed supplies and equipment?
8. Do I make a special effort to see that each member thoroughly understands the subject matter needed to complete his project satisfactorily?

PARENT COOPERATION

When parents cooperate with 4-H members, club work has a better opportunity to meet the basic needs of boys and girls. It's easier to complete the project requirements when Mom and Dad are interested; their interest also encourages youngsters to take part every way they can in all club activities.

4-H'ers gain the feeling of prestige they need when their family is interested in their activities and approves their accomplishments. This support also gives them a feeling of personal security that should help carry them forward with greater confidence into out-of-home activities.

Parents who can provide transportation to club activities are more likely to do so when they're informed about 4-H Club work and interested in it. If he has transportation to club events, a member can participate, compete and be recognized for his accomplishments.

Discussion Check List:

(Think who can do each task best: leader, agent, member, or parent.)

1. Do I plan an adequate information system for parents of all first-year 4-H Club members?
2. Do I include parents of 4-H members in as many 4-H events as possible?
3. Do I help the parents by—
 - (a) Arranging for personal and at-home help on project work when needed?
 - (b) Arranging for transportation of members needing a ride?
 - (c) Arranging for financial help for members who need it to start a project?

RECOGNITION AND COMPETITION

Recognition and competition may partially satisfy several basic needs, such as a desire—

- For attention.
- For prestige.
- To excel.
- For a feeling of accomplishment.

However, first-year 4-H club members do not always have so much chance to satisfy these desires as more experienced club members do, although their basic needs are just as great.

Perhaps competition can fulfill these needs. If competition turns out to be satisfactory for the 4-H'er, all four of his needs may be met to some degree. If he feels that he has failed in competition, all these needs are not met. When this happens many boys and girls eventually turn to other activity in which there seems to be a better chance of having them met. We should recognize that the desire to excel is not satisfied in competition merely through competing.

Recognition need not be limited to project work. Recognition for individual talent, industry, enthusiasm, and leadership can provide needed satisfactions too. The need for attention, prestige, accomplishment, or even excelling can be attained in other ways than competition.

If recognition through competition in the project field is the major opportunity for a 4-H'er to meet various basic needs, it is important that you help him complete his project so that he can compete. It's also important that he compete in classes in which he has a chance to win.

Discussion Check List:

(Think who can do each task best: leader, agent, member, or parent.)

1. Do I provide opportunity for every member to exhibit?
To compete?
2. Do I provide opportunity for every member to receive recognition of some kind?
 3. Do I arrange for transportation for all who need it?
 4. Do I provide opportunity for members to exhibit or compete in other than subject-matter project work?
 5. Do I provide opportunity for recognition of other than subject-matter project work, exhibiting, or competition?
 6. Do I emphasize to each member the importance of improving his own record?
 7. Do I help individuals evaluate their own progress?
 8. Do I give personal recognition for progress, regardless of the starting point?

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Each member needs to be noticed, to be important, to achieve, and to be praised.

Adapted from Helble

